

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Wild & Scenic River Suitability Report Summary

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, (Pub. L. 90-543 as amended: 16 U.S.C. 1271-1287) establishes a method for providing federal protection for certain free-flowing rivers and preserving them and their immediate environments for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The function of a wild and scenic river review is to inventory and study the rivers and water bodies within the boundary of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) to determine whether they merit inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System (NWSRS).

The Refuge's Suitability Report evaluates 10 of the Refuge's rivers found eligible for designation based on their free-flowing character and their having at least one of the following seven "outstandingly remarkable values" (ORVs): scenic, recreational, geologic, historic, fish, wildlife, and cultural.

Suitability Analysis Process

The purpose of the suitability study is to determine whether eligible segments would be appropriate additions to the NWSRS by considering tradeoffs between development and protection. The suitability analysis is based on 11 factors identified in Sections 4(a), 5(c) and 6(c) of the Wild and Scenic River Act. Suitability factors include the physical, social, and political environments; economic consequences; and the manageability of rivers if they were to be designated.

Only Congress can designate a wild and scenic river. The Service cannot administratively designate a river into the NWSRS through a planning decision or other agency decision; therefore, no segment studied is designated or will automatically be designated as part of the NWSRS. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act suitability evaluation process does not result in actual designation—it only determines suitability for designation.

Management of Suitable Rivers

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires that rivers and/or segments determined suitable be managed to maintain their free flow, water quality, ORVs, and preliminary or recommended classification. Any suitable rivers that are recommended for inclusion in the NWSRS would be managed according to interim management prescriptions intended to protect the river's qualities until congressional action regarding designation is taken. Interim management to

adequately protect a candidate river is derived from the existing authorities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and subject to existing private rights.

Refuge rivers found suitable but not recommended for inclusion in the NWSRS would also receive additional management protection. In other words, the effect of not recommending rivers for designation would be that eligible and suitable rivers would continue to be protected by interim management prescriptions and other protections afforded by Refuge status to ensure their continued eligible status. River segments determined to be not suitable return to the underlying management prescribed in the effective Comprehensive Conservation Plan.